

Writer's Quest



Broad Editing and Services

Writers' Corner

Writers' Block—Character Development

By M Broadhurst © 2007

Writers' Corner

- Create a fictional character in one or two paragraphs describing the physical features, personality and mannerisms.
- Make a list of all things we now know about this character.
- Question what we know about this character.
- Delve deeper to find the answers to those questions.

There are a number of ways to create a character; the most common is to write up a list of physical traits, habits, hobbies, work, and belongings. Personally, I find this interferes with the creative flow and doesn't breathe life into the character. This exercise will help you to develop a character in a much more fun way.

Create a character in one or two paragraphs. Describe his/her physical features, personality, and mannerisms; include anything you wish. Avoid writing about someone you know, the aim is to create a fictional character. This is just the first stage so don't worry about trying to create a polished piece yet.

Example – Section 1:

Molly's her name, mopping is her trade and has been for more than forty-two years. Actually, it was difficult to tell the difference between her hair and her mop. Every morning she shuffled up the streets and cleaned houses, and every afternoon she would shuffle home again, indulge in her weakness for chocolate while watching the early quiz shows, and head off to bed before the late news started. A sweet old lady who would cross the road to the other footpath just to avoid disturbing a bird on the ground. Her once beautiful blue eyes had become dull, and a white cloud crept over the pupil of her right eye. Her unwrinkled mouth told the story of a life without laughter. Not that anyone heard her complain, in fact she said very little. She nodded to the postie each morning and to anyone who happened to pass by. Her shapely legs looked as though they belonged on a younger woman, and shouldn't have to endure the frumpish dresses Molly bought from the bargain box at the local shop.

The above example took just a few minutes to write; yet we are starting to get a clear picture of Molly. Let's make a list of all the things that we now know about the character. Again, don't worry about constructing beautifully worded sentences, keep it simple:

- Her name is Molly.
- She's a cleaner, and most likely has been all of her life.
- She's either approaching retirement or has passed it.
- Molly loves chocolate and watching game shows on television.
- She's a creature of habit.
- Molly is very lonely and has possibly known much sadness.
- She's gentle and possibly likes animals.
- She has blue eyes, but is blind in her right eye.
- She might be timid.
- She doesn't complain.
- Molly doesn't talk much to people, but is still friendly and likeable.
- She has shapely legs that look much younger than normal.
- She wears frumpy dresses bought from the local shop.
- Perhaps she doesn't have much money.

Notice the use of words such as 'possibly' and 'perhaps' in the above list. At this point I don't know the answers, but there are possibilities now. Questions start to form.

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- Why has she cleaned all her life and not changed jobs?
- Where was she educated and how long did she stay?
- Why does she have to keep working at her age? Does she like it and wants to keep busy? Or is it a case of she has to?
- Does she like the game shows because she is quite intelligent and can answer the harder questions or is it simply for company?
- Doesn't she have any family or friends? Had she been married? Is she divorced or did her husband die?
- Could an operation save her vision?
- She has retreated into her own shell and shut everybody else out, why?
- Why do her legs look younger? Did she dance when she was younger? Did she do something else that might explain this?
- Is she battling to survive? Or does she have money put away and just doesn't like to spend much?
- Does she ever travel far from where she lives?

The questions can go on and on. And from these questions we can write more about Molly.

Example – Section 2:

No one suspected Molly's past, least of all her neighbours. She had kept it quiet for so long now, but she remembered every detail and believed she could identify the precise day when her life changed. She was nineteen, studying law during the day and cleaning homes and offices at night to help pay for her tuition. She spent her nights off dancing with her friends. They were good friends, but they wouldn't understand, no one would. It was at the dance that Molly met Tony; he seemed so sweet, so perfect. After a six-month courtship they wed and moved into their new home – two storeys. Tony paid for it all, and Molly didn't question it – why would she? He was a successful businessman, and he treated her well. There was no need for her to question anything as long as he kept treating her well. She trusted him completely ... until she stumbled on the money he had hidden in the hallway closet.

Of course we could keep going with Section 2, which would create more questions, and then we would be able to write a third section. Do you see what's happening? You're actually writing the backstory as well as creating a character. You may choose to add all or parts of these examples to your story. You may throw out ideas, alter and then use them. From this one character we could send this story anywhere – murder, mystery, betrayal, lost love – it's up to you. Or you could use the character in several stories. No more writers' block.

Next time we will take the character you've created here and take an unexpected turn, which will create even more ideas.

*'From this one
character we could
send this story
anywhere ...
It's up to you.
No more writers'
block!'*

Sentence Starter ...

Many writers suffer the 'blank page' complex; therefore, each month we will supply you with a first sentence. Now your page isn't blank any more. Let your imagination take you on a journey.

Submit your story to us for a chance to have it published. Runner-ups will receive a 'Good Read' certificate.

This issue's sentence starter:

My eyes widened with terror as I took in the big and hairy ...

Word Finder

Words can be found horizontally, vertically and back to front.

N O I T C I F P L O T S O H G T
F A H P E S G N I T T E S P R O
R R T I A I S H O R T S T O R Y
E T G R O S R E H S I L B U P N
E I E C O P Y V I L L A I N L P
L C N S M O C L I M A X R Y A R
A L I I A N E V I T O M E R N O
N E L S N Y S T F A R D P O T O
C S T B U S I N E S S F O T N F
E C U O S R E P A P L I R S O R
E E O O C G H T C R E A T I V E
D N S K R S A E D I V T E H E A
I E T S I L A N R U O J R E L D
T E X T P W O R D S N O D D L E
O N O I T C I F N O N A M E A R
R Y R E T S Y M W R I T E R S S



Word List:

articles
books
business
climax
copy
creative
drafts
editor
fiction
freelance
ghost
ideas
journalist

manuscript
motive
mystery
name
non-fiction
novellas
novels
outline
paper
plan
plots
proofreader

publisher
reporter
scene
scripts
settings
short story
story
synopsis
text
villain
words
writer

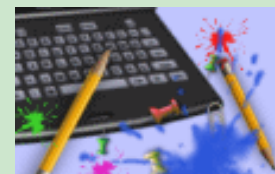
Turn to page 8 for the answers to the Word Finder and the hidden message.

What is the hidden message?

The remaining letters will spell out a message. Can you work it out?

Having trouble with your story or article?

Why not post the problem to our Writers' Workshop forum and gain help from other writers. It's free!



Views on Writing

Write Your Heart Out!

By Sonia Doreen Paul © 2007

Stipulating that you are an upcoming, passionate and creative writer, I would like to introduce to you some techniques to unleash your creative writing potential. A crucial element to consider initially would be definition of purpose, which can be defined as 'free will opposing norms and principles.'

Free will opposing norms and principles

As educated individuals it remains our primary obligation to pay tribute to our nation by being objective and utilising our writing skills to address features and stories most important to our country. Creative writers do not adhere themselves to the norms of their society and literary standards. They are more like daydreamers who sketch their visualised castles on paper and are repeatedly accused of irrational themes, deconstructive thoughts and notions. Remarkable as it may seem, their work arouses much curiosity, fame and prosperity as opposed to a traditional writer's predictable context. They tend to break all rules and free themselves from daily constraints of reality. Their theories may seem neurotic in pattern and mystic in nature simply because they have merged visionary faith into their literature. Such an example is prevalent in William Shakespeare's earliest comedies, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which chants creative imagination empowered with the supernatural world.

Read widely

Writing can be developed as a craft through perseverance and eagerness. Reading can invoke your inner most thoughts. It would be beneficial to read as much as possible to identify and personalise your writing style. Initially you may read non-fiction or mysteries, but exploring diverse genres of literature opens your mind to accept different styles of narration. People may react – good or bad – to your work; it's important not to pay too much heed as everyone has their own opinion. The important thing is to expose your work to the masses and strive to win yourself a dedicated crowd of readers.

Reach out

If you work for a local newspaper, reach out to people and stimulate a reaction and a response to your writing. Don't limit your writing to concerts, latest fashion, upcoming events or movie reviews, but explore audience's reactions and what your readers are looking for while trying to answer the following questions:

- What is the event?
- Why is it happening in your state?
- Is it delayed, or was it rescheduled, and why?
- When is the event?
- Is there free attendance to some people?
- Is the event on a weekend, or does it coincide with another gig?
- Where is the event and why it is staged there?
- How do you expect the crowd to behave?

These questions will surely get your audience involved.

Obtaining comments from the audience can be a win-win situation. While your interviewees anxiously wait to see your article so that they may see their remarks in print, you have the thrill of seeing your article in print as well.

Besides earning writing credits, you can contribute to society and draw awareness to our problems. Look around you, and what do you see: famine, drought, corruption, immorality, rape and abuse. Through your poetry or articles you can depict the horrors that society confronts, or detail the excellent infrastructure of your city.

Besides earning writing credits, you can contribute to society and draw awareness to our problems.'

From page 4: Write Your Heart Out!

Rewriting and Recreating

At times you may feel a strong urge to rewrite a paragraph or verse in a poem or story. In your own solace, you may want to pen your thoughts upon finishing a certain chapter. Various ideas may flash through your mind as you summarise a chapter or note down your reactions. When you finish, your inspiration will stare back at you in big, bold font. Don't worry yourself with ethics and norms. As a free-will writer you will gradually learn the art of expressing your personal, heartfelt, provocative and instructive ideas and won't be afraid to take on an opponent in your game of words.

About the author:

Sonia Doreen Paul is a freelance non-fiction writer and poet. She is committed, creative and hard working with a potential to meet strict deadlines. Her strongest assets are thriving under pressure and live reporting. Pakistani by origin, she is born, educated and currently residing in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Résumé Builder

This section is dedicated to help writers build and record their successes, and help writers see the writing industry from a different perspective. This issue's article explains the importance of why freelance writers should have a résumé.

Why Have a Résumé?

By M Broadhurst © 2007

Congratulations, while you didn't manage to win that competition, your work is still going to be read at the festival. Not winning the competition is a slight disappointment, but they liked your story enough to want to read it at the festival! That's still an accomplishment and you know it, so you strut and dance around the house, tell everyone you meet of your good news (including the budgie and the stranger who was just looking for directions). The euphoria lasts for days until life pushes the thought from your mind.

Forgetting something? You bet. You forgot to add it to your résumé. Every writer who is serious about getting published and turning their writing into a career should have an up-to-date résumé. Every success, no matter how big or small, should be added. There will come a time when a publisher, which you've submitted your story to, will want to see your résumé, some of them ask for it to be included along with your manuscript. And an agent won't bother with you unless they've seen what your achievements have been to date.

I'm not trying to scare you or make you think that it's all too hard. It isn't. Most writers start off while working a regular job. Perhaps you're a secretary or sales representative, or an engineer. You had to study for that career, you had to undergo interviews and handing over your professional résumé, you had to have a smile painted on your face and a hand ready to shake before you were deemed worthy for the company to hire you. And you do all this with a shrug of your shoulders and the attitude that it has to be done. Not a big deal, it's just a part of life, right? Well, writing is no different. It's a career and it takes the same level of effort to study, learn and build a résumé. The only difference is that building a writing résumé is fun.

The reason why we write is because we enjoy it. Developing worlds, characters, problems and solutions – we are in control of what we write. Is there anything more rewarding when we send out stories and articles, and they're acknowledged in a positive way? Of course there is – getting paid for it, right? This is why we keep a résumé, to prove we are here for the long haul,

'It's a career and it takes the same level of effort to study, learn and build a résumé.'

From page 5: Why Have a Résumé?

that we have talent and are determined. The résumé is a record of our achievements and what we have studied. This proves to publishers and agents that we are professional and have a history as a writer. A promising history indicates a promising future, which is what publishers and agents want to know. It's like one-hit wonders in music, musicians make one song memorable and are never heard of again. Publishers and agents don't want to waste their time or money on a one-hit writer. But someone that has a steady record of achievements and plans to go on doing just that will make a bigger impression.

Don't put it off, if you've made progress then add it to your résumé straight away before you have a chance to forget. Doubt that you could ever forget? Believe me, it is hard to remember every milestone especially the ones that happened ten years ago. Will you be able to remember every time your work was published, including the publications that are not well known? Will you remember every time a story was read at some outback festival from another state? And will you remember every time you were a runner-up in a competition in ten years time? All of these accomplishments matter, and as you progress as a writer so will your successes.

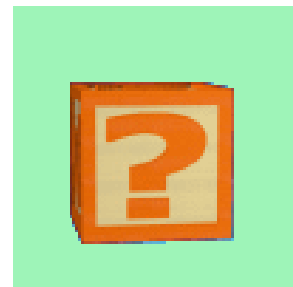
What do you include in your résumé? Anything that has something to do with your writing and leave out everything that doesn't. Publishers are unlikely to care if your hobby is backgammon. You're not applying for a job to work in their company, you're trying to sell yourself as a professional writer, someone who can be counted on, someone they can afford to spend money and time on you. The following is a list of headings you should consider adding to your résumé: qualifications, experience and accomplishments.

Qualifications. Write down every course, and every result that has some bearing on your writing. If you've studied how to write and design web pages then add it. If you have achieved high distinctions in short story writing then now's the time to brag. Include completion dates of all courses undertaken – this shows your progress. Before you frame your certificates and mount them onto your wall, make copies of them and any letters to prove your claims. It would be a good idea to scan your certificates so you can attach them to your résumé for when you send it electronically. Make sure this suits the publisher and/or agent: never assume they want it emailed.

Experience. This allows you to list your skills. Not everything learnt has been in a classroom environment. If you have on-the-job training then mention it. Perhaps your employer has you writing the company's catalogue or monthly report. You might be surprised just how much writing you do, and not all of it has to be creative.

Accomplishments. Everything you have achieved as a writer should go into this category. Perhaps you co-wrote a friend's biography, or have a stack of runner-up certificates – list them all. Include a subheading that lists all of your published work. Include all mediums used: books, magazines, e-zines, anthologies, blogs, and public readings. Don't forget to indicate the publishing press, dates, issue numbers of magazines, and web site addresses of where your articles/stories reside.

You may not be able to include something for each category, but over time you will increase the amount of successes and your résumé will start to look very impressive. In next month's issue, we'll discuss how to go about achieving these successes.



Publishers and agents don't want to waste their time or money on a one-hit writer.'

Writers' Workshop, a free forum for writers to discuss their stories and articles. Visit today and make new friends in a supportive atmosphere!



Poet's Corner

Snow

By Sonia Doreen Paul © 2007

Under a subdued sun,
Basking in its glory
Purity at it's best,
The snow tells a story.

I'm glanced at in awe,
As if a blooming flower.
The heavens, my origin,
I'm compared to shining stars.

My airs are always chilly,
My temperature - frozen cold.
I breathe mists of water,
And always play outdoors.

Passers-by perceive me
As a stunning view.
Earth, my destination,
Rainbow is my hue.

The moon is my companion;
The trees sell me their souls.
I spread my white feathers
Over plains, mountains and moors.

I'm trodden upon and molested.
I'm shoved and heaped aside,
Yet humanity foresees my coming,
As the best of winter times.

About the author:

Sonia Doreen Paul is a freelance non-fiction writer and poet. She is committed, creative and hard working with a potential to meet strict deadlines. Her strongest assets are thriving under pressure and live reporting. Pakistani by origin, she is born, educated and currently residing in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.



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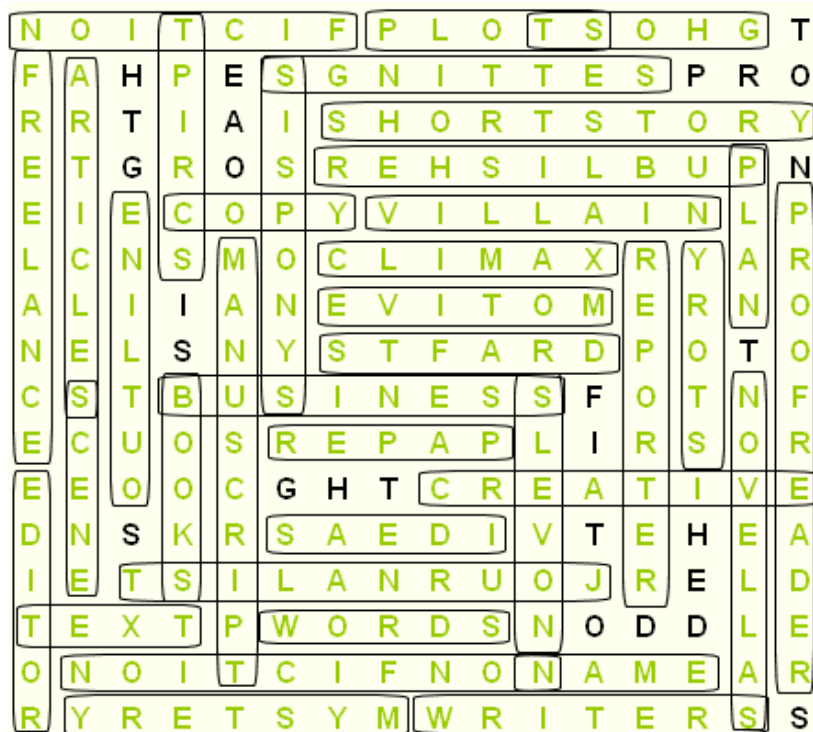
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Answers: Word Finder



Hidden message: The protagonist fights the odds.

Authors

We are currently accepting articles, short stories and poems. Emails us for more details.

